

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL**

**ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF LOWELL, MA:
MAKING, REMAKING, AND REMAKING AGAIN**

**INFORMANT: NYOLA VAILLANCOURT (NEE ROMANAUSKAS) [LITHUANIA]
INTERVIEWER: CRAIG THOMAS AND SHAUN MCCARTHY
DATE: MARCH 15, 2008**

**C = CRAIG
N = NOYLA
S = SHAUN**

Tape 08.31

C: Okay, for the record, what's your name and where do you live?

N: My name now is Nyola Vaillancourt and I live in Groton, MA.

C: When you say your name now what do you mean?

N: Well, because this is about ethnography and I am of Lithuanian heritage, when I was baptized my name was Nyola Romanauskas. My father coming from Lithuania wasn't very interested in English sounding names so he asked my mother if we couldn't give me a Lithuanian name. Nyola is spelled N-I-J-O-L-E and so when my mother registered me for school she said nobody is going to call her by her correct name, they will mispronounce it and call her some silly thing, so she anglicized it herself and made it Nyola.

C: Was that a tough decision for your mother do you think?

N: I don't think so, I think she fortunately was thinking ahead and didn't like what she thought people would call me. My mother though she was born in this country, both my grandparents came in the early 1900s and they essentially spoke only Lithuanian and my grandfather had a bakery and it was in a Polish neighborhood. So my mother learned to speak Polish from the clientele that they had. She was very fluent in Lithuanian, so much so, that I would say even to this day people will think that she came from Europe because she is so fluent and has such good intonation and her accent is really strong. So she was very familiar with Lithuanian and Polish

and of course when she went to school she had to learn English. So she understands the difference s amongst languages and how people say things, not that she was schooled in it, but was smart enough to hear the differences and say she didn't want a funny sounding name for her daughter. So that's how that worked.

C: Do you know more about how your grandparents came over, like what their track was? The other woman I talked with earlier came through Germany and then through England and that was through the circumstances of the 1940s. Do you have a sense of the path your grandparents took to get here?

N: I know very little because in those days, you have to understand, people left Europe because there was something terrible going on and so when they came here it was like they dropped a curtain on that part of their life. The things that my mother told was essentially that, and I used to laugh at this, that my grandfather was a draft dodger, because at that time Russia had jurisdiction over Lithuania and my grandfather did not want to be in the Russian army because he saw what was happening to people and they were very subjugated so, let me see if I can get this right. There were three brothers, I think his oldest brother came over first to America, just to come to America because they wanted to be someplace better and I guess he had earned his passage and came over. And then he got a job here, raised enough money to bring my grandfather over, and this was early in the 1900s, may-be just the cusp. And then the two brothers worked, saved money and brought their third brother over. So the three brothers came, they worked here, like I said my grandfather had a bakery, but he was also, he was a young man when he came, but he was also skilled as a tailor, a furrier, a farmer....and so I know that's how the three brothers came here. My grandmother, she has a real funny story, well, she came here....I always have to work backwards from when my mother was born...when mother was born she was twenty, so I think my grandmother was born around 1895 and she came here in 1910 when she was fifteen years old and then she had a couple of sisters who had come to America. My grandmother had lived on a farm, it was a really hard life, and she had two sisters that had come from Lithuania already. She had another sister who had saved enough money and had her passage, but I guess at the time what you had to do was go through a medical before you could get on the ship to come...

C: So I've heard.

N: And I think days before she developed an eye infection, her sister, and so her.... And her sister was older, so my grandmother saw that her sister has this eye problem and now she's concerned about how she's going to get on the ship, so my grandmother's story is that she figured okay, she can't go, so she, during the night before the ship leaves, takes her sister's identity, and her passport and her ticket and went and got on the ship and came here. So at fifteen years old, she came on the ship by herself knowing nothing.

C: Wow.

N: But she did have relatives here, so she came...

C: Relatives here in Lowell?

N: No, in Maine. She came here through Ellis Island, she had to go through, and as a matter of fact, when Ellis Island was doing their immigration museum, they were trying to raise money, and they said if you had any relatives that came through Ellis Island you could have their name inscribed for a donation, so my mother had that done for both my grandparents because we knew they both came through Ellis Island and she wanted to contribute and have it done, so she did that for them. So my grandmother came here, met up with her sisters up in Maine, worked up in Maine, I think in some kind of a manufacturing situation in Rumford, Maine. And so they worked there and I don't know whether business wasn't so good or....but then she got a job down in Haverhill working in a hat factory making women's hats. So she came down from Maine, went to Haverhill and they worked like six days a week but Sundays they had off and down here in Shedd Park, on Sundays, they used to have bands play, you know, people who liked to play music, and it was a free day. It must have been around the time that they had mill girls I would think, so it was kind of like a social activity. So, some of the other girls that worked with my grandmother at the hat factory said that they had heard about this band, this activity that they had at Shedd Park with bands playing and so they came on a Sunday and my grandfather and his two brothers and a couple of other men all played instruments so they happened to be the band that was playing, and I guess my grandfather noticed my grandmother in the audience and asked her if she would come back the following week and so I guess she did and eventually they got together.

C: Your grandmother did a lot of manufacturing work, which like the mill girls was not that uncommon. Do you know anything about the work that she did? Did she work with predominately women in the types of mills, like the women's hat factory, or do you know that much about Maine?

N: You know we went up there to visit her family when I was a little girl, my father took my mother who still had a relative up there and I think it must have been her sister's son. So we went up to visit and I really didn't learn much about it, all I know is they had the biggest blueberries, but it seemed to me at the time that it was really rural, I mean compared to like Lowell, it seemed like it was very, very rural you know?

N: I know she left there to go do the work in Haverhill in hats.

N: Later on she did work at the Abbott worsted which was big. They did spinning and weaving of thread there, cuz actually my husband could tell you a funny story. My grandmother was working there as a little girl and she was working where they spin the thread and my husband, who's a little bit older than myself, got a job there as a young boy and he was supposed to pick up all the waste, so if a thread broke, the women had to tie it off and then they would cut the piece from the knot and stick it in their apron and then he would come along and collect it all and his job was to then weigh it so then the manufacturer could say you were wasting too much. So when he first started there, he was doing what he was supposed to do, and he reported the amount of waste, and then the big boss came along and told all the women that they were wasting too much of the thread, so they cornered him and said "What did you do with the

waste?" He said, "I weighed it up and told the boss like I'm supposed to." And they said, "You're supposed to flush half of it down the toilet first." So he was telling me how my grandmother was really the one that gave him the what-for and she spoke very broken English, so for him to understand the message it had to be pretty strong. We never met then, but years later when I was dating my husband, he eventually met my grandmother and they were talking and said, "Don't I know you?" And sure enough that was the lady...

C: I'm interested too in your family, yourself, your sister and your parents. Your grandparents spoke predominately Lithuanian, but what about in your family, for you growing up?

N: Well, did you hear me say that my father came from Lithuania? My father was born in the U.S., my grandparents knew my mother's parents, they knew each other because they were all here at the same time and the community was predominately here. But, my father's parents came here specifically for the reason that they wanted to earn money to go back to Lithuania and be wealthy.

C: And they came to Lowell?

N: My grandfather had a store here, can't tell you much about it, but they were here in Lowell. They were married, my grandparents came here, they met here; they didn't come from Lithuania married. They met here, got married, had four of their five children here, and they had a store here. The year my father was born which was 1918, he was...let's see it would have been 1919 because he was born in October. In 1919 they moved back to Lithuania, they sold their store, they had a bundle of money and they bought a big farm. One son died here and they took their other children back and my father was the youngest. But then when they moved back to Lithuania they had one more son. Because my father and his sister and his other two brothers were...oh, so they had six kids, I forgot the one that died. So there was my father's two older brothers, his sister and my father, and my other uncle was born over there. So that was, what did I say? 1919. 1939 my father tells me that he and his brothers and sisters are notified by the U.S. government that they are U.S. citizens, that Russia and Germany are advancing, they don't know if they're going to be able to give them sanctuary anywhere, so they said you have the chance to leave now, we don't know what the story will be. My father was just nineteen, twenty years old he was in a good position to leave. His older brothers and sister were either in school, getting married or just married and had children and they were told that their wives, spouses and children were not eligible. Only the actual American citizen would they allow to come over. So my father was the only one that said to my grandfather, "I want to go to America." So my grandfather sold off one quarter of his farm and gave my father the money because he said, "You know I'll probably never see you again," because they knew things were bad and they weren't going to leave, so they gave my father the money, he came....

C: So your maternal grandfather was here, he had a bakery and your maternal grandmother moved to Maine and then met him here, and you just told the story of your father's parents being here and then going back. Do you have a sense in Lowell of where people were situated? Where your grandfather's bakery was? And where people went when they first came?

N: I think my grandfather's bakery was on Lakeview Avenue, cuz like I said it was in a Polish neighborhood and that wasn't predominately Lithuanian. My understanding, my recollection, is like this area and up around Roger's Street where the Lithuanian church was, so Chapel Street and all those streets, that was predominately where the Lithuanians were situated, because as I said my mother learned all her Polish from their clientele and that was all Polish. And there's still a Polish National church there on Lakeview Avenue.

S: And a Polish American club I think.

N: Yeah and the PAV, the Polish vets is up there too, so that was more Polish. The Lithuanians, and I think originally my grandparents house was on...their first house was around Chapel Street or up in this area someplace, but they moved to the house in Centralville in 1920.

C: So you grew up with your parents and your sisters in Centralville?

N: Right.

C: Now I just want to make sure you get time to finish the story of your father coming back. So he got the money from your grandfather and moved directly to Lowell with that?

N: He did because he had...still here were his father's brothers, so my father had two uncles and an aunt on his mother's side, so there were other relatives. So I think, I don't know this for a fact, but I'm trying to put the information together. My grandfather and his brothers came much like my other grandfather and his brothers, you know, one would come over and then help the other. And they didn't go back; they did what they wanted to do here and decided they were going to stay as opposed to my grandfather who wanted to go back. So my father came here and associated with his uncles and aunts from his mother's and father's side, and then of course he met my mother and they got married. So, when my parents got married my father only spoke Lithuanian, he didn't have a background in English at all. My mother had a strong background in Lithuanian because that's how she was brought up, and my grandparents, as I said, didn't speak very much English even though they worked here. So when I was born we lived with my grandparents, and I'm the oldest, Ramona's the youngest; I have a brother in between. I spoke only Lithuanian until I went to school.

C: Went to elementary school?

N: Yes, first grade. And my brother was in the same boat, so we only spoke Lithuanian at home even though my mother was American.

C: To get back to your family, although education is a good story too....Growing up you spoke Lithuanian with your grandparents. Did you speak it with your parents as well?

N: Yep.

C: What other things did you do that were part of your family being Lithuanian? I know you lived in a certain way, but did you have any things you observed like specific religious holidays? What things do you associate with growing up Lithuanian?

N: Well, it was my life, so what do I know otherwise? I mean if you spoke to any other Lithuanian American you'd find that the Lithuanian culture was very strong and they're intensely proud. I couldn't believe as I got older that Lithuania was such a tiny country because growing up as a Lithuanian you had to think that Lithuania was the biggest country in the world which it was, but six hundred years ago. There's just such a national pride and a belief that this is something you never forget and our life revolved around Lithuanian people even though we, my particular family, didn't live in the Lithuanian community. We went to the Lithuanian church.

C: Which was where?

N: On Rogers Street.

C: And what was it called?

N: St. Joseph's Lithuanian church. We walked from Centralville to St. Joseph's Lithuanian church. Walked! As children we had to participate in religious instruction and Lithuanian cultural classes.

C: At the church?

N: At the church. They had nuns come in and teach us. So we spent, I don't know. Half a day Saturday there at minimum, but all the other families did the same thing, so there were a group of kids that I grew up with, there were my friends at school, and then there were my Lithuanians friends because every weekend I was with them, and a lot of the culture was right here in this club cuz this is where the Lithuanian people came together. I mean it was very different back then.

C: How was it different?

N: I mean it was much more of a social interaction, you were with people that spoke the language and it was a language that was different from outside the door. The food that you ate wasn't peculiar to anybody else. The holidays that you were celebrating were celebrated the same way everyone else was celebrating them.

C: What do you mean by that?

N: Well, Christmas day is not a big deal, its Christmas Eve. Christmas Eve is a much more important day, so your table setting, how the table is set, the kinds of food that you ate....

C: What kinds of food did you eat?

N: No meat, you couldn't have any meat on Christmas Eve, and there was supposed to be a certain number of dishes. Another part of it was that you always set a place at the table for someone who had passed on so that you don't forget them and truly, truly traditional, you're supposed to lay hay on the table and a cloth over it to remember that Jesus was born in a stable. It all revolved around the Catholic church because the majority of Lithuanians are Roman Catholic, even though they were the last country in Europe to become...

C: Catholicized?

N: Well, not just catholicized, but to accept a religion that wasn't based on nature. It was the last place Christianity went, even the Lithuanian holidays that they celebrate, although they call them St. Johns Day, it's still a celebration of the summer solstice. So what they did was take their pagan holidays and assigned saints names to them, but to this day I can tell you that in June, around the 20th, we'll be invited to a St. Johns festival and part of it is that they light these fires and supposedly the boys have to jump over the fires and girls make wreaths out of flowers and they're supposed to put them in the water, there's a candle inside. So, it's very much based on nature and a lot of pagan traditions.

C: Have any of those kinds of festivals happened around here?

N: There's a fellow in Lawrence who tries to still have them. The older population is dying off and a lot of younger people don't have the connection.

S: Do you think that maybe the day is still celebrated, but not the tradition?

N: If they do try to celebrate the day, they do try... I mean the last times that I went they still try to encourage the girls to weave a flower wreath for their hair, but jumping over the fire gets a little risky... They do try to have more traditional foods. I know my own daughter likes to know about it and participate, but current life catches up with you too... So it's hard, it's really hard.

C: You said that the passing on of those traditions to your own children has been difficult. What other things have you tried to incorporate with your husband and children. I don't know if you have one daughter or many children....

N: I have one daughter and three sons. One son lives in Virginia, two live in California so its really hard.

C: But growing up did you try to bring them up with any Lithuanian culture, or speaking Lithuanian?

N: It was hard with the speaking Lithuanian because my husband has French and English heritage, but I will have to say he has converted a lot to Lithuanian!

C: So was that tough at the time, by the way, marrying somebody who wasn't Lithuanian?

N: Oh my father was really mad. I'll tell you how bad it was. When I was a girl growing up they used to have Lithuanian picnics. A Lithuanian picnic was another Sunday afternoon activity at a park where all the Lithuanian people would come. They'd have Lithuanian food, they'd have beer. They'd sing songs. There was always somebody with an accordion and a couple of other people. They might play some games, the kids would go off playing, the women would sit and talk, the men would play cards and talk, but it was something I grew up with. And then too they would have a band and young people would meet, and they started to encourage people to do that. My father was very protective of me and so he really didn't want me to meet any boys, so when I started dating, he decided he really wanted me to date Lithuanian boys and it was tough. I happened to get married pretty young, but my father was young too. Now being older I look back on the day I got married and how hard he cried and now I know why, but at the time it was, "What are you doing this for?" And I thought, "I'm eighteen, I know all about the world." So that was tough, but getting back to trying to pass on traditions.... Our family's pretty close so, we spent a lot of time with my parents and my children call my father deduk which is the Lithuanian word for grandfather. My grandmother happened to still be alive when I had my first couple of kids and so she was the bobute, the grandmother, and then we started to become a little more anglicized and call my mother nana. I have ten grandchildren, and I'm bobute to all ten. Now even the two boyfriends of the two oldest granddaughters call me bobute and my husband deduk. Which is kind of neat because all my friends used to call my grandmother bobute. I was out visiting one of my sons in California one year and we were talking about Christmas Eve and Christmas Eve dinners, because I go out and I make Lithuanian food for them because one of my sons in particular enjoys cooking so I was out there making cabbage rolls for him and he says, "Mom, you have to show me how you make the cabbage leaf more flexible so that I can roll it." So I had to show him the little tricks of how to pare it down and stuff it like that, so he's really into it. So we were talking about Christmas Eve and what they had for dinner. His wife comes from England so she's very English in her cooking, but she's also very international in how she accepts things. So they said to me, "You need to come out here on Christmas Eve and teach us what we need to know better about the food and how to prepare it, so they are interested. I have two grandsons that are half Japanese. If you want to see something funny... most Lithuanians are blond and blue eyed, so first of all my two grandsons stick out, but the biggest thing is when they were in pre-school, their pre-school had an international day, so my half Japanese grandsons went dressed in Lithuanian costumes rather than Japanese! My daughter-in-law says she wants them to know this half of their heritage cuz they're in California with Japanese people all the time, so they wanted to promote the other side of their family which is good. I have to say they're all very accepting and I've been to Lithuania twice to teach. There's an organization in the States called A.P.P.L.E. and it's an acronym for American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education. And what they do is recruit American teachers, American college professors to go to Lithuania and provide insights into current pedagogical theories and updated teachings. They have institutes over there, so I did that twice and when I went to Lithuania, I would ask my children what they wanted me to bring back and they would say, "Could you bring back a Lithuanian costume for the kids?" so they could use it in school so they could know. So they're very familiar with what's a traditional big deal in Lithuania like the history of the amber. I think all of my older grandchildren have done reports on... well, one of them is a junior in high school and just this fall she did a report on how my grandmother came from Lithuania as part of an immigration series that they were doing. So I would say that all of the kids know they have a

strong Lithuanian heritage, they know that I'm proud of that; that I've been there. I think I mentioned that my father had one more brother and he's still alive in Lithuania so those two times that I went to teach, I called and made a connection with him and actually stayed with him while I was in Lithuania. I have a couple of cousins that I communicate with. Of course, during Communism they stopped a lot of the stuff, and ripped up our letters and a lot of communication was stopped. But, an interesting thing is my son-in-law was a navy pilot and when my father wrote to his brother to tell him about his granddaughter getting married to a U.S. navy pilot, their letters were intercepted even then.

S: Really?

C: What year was that?

N: My daughter married in...let me think....in 1984. And my father finally got word not to say anything else about our connection with having a son in the military. You wouldn't think even then though...

C: My understanding is that it got more tense right before the wall fell.

N: That's true, that's true.

C: So you went over with A.P.P.L.E. which means you yourself were an educator? You were teaching? I'm interested in how that worked with your husband and your children if you were working. And how you may have interacted with other people in the Lithuanian neighborhood, if they may have been helping or how they were a part of that. I know that's a large question.

N: A good part of my early life was always integrated with Lithuanian activities, Lithuanian culture, Lithuanian people, always. And they were strong here; we would be in parades, floats....

N: My first visit to Lithuania I came home and I was a different person. It changed my life dramatically. I told you I was in education and I worked in Chelmsford for forty years. At the beginning of the year in August we'd start back to school and the administrators all had a round table meeting. And so when we had that meeting, they'd usually start off with "Let's everyone give a few words about what you did this summer." And so I related to them my experience in going to Lithuania. I'm gonna tell you, there was such a hush in the group afterwards and the Superintendent says, "Gee, I think I'll use this for my opening remarks this year in school." But it dramatically changed my life. I can't say one thing that made the difference, I think it was making a connection to seeing why my grandfather planted the fruit trees that he planted and the way he lined up the yard and the things that they would talk about and the songs that I would hear...it was like all of the sudden all of the pieces of the puzzle fit and I felt like I know my origin, I know where I come from, I'm complete. To see the three quarters of the farm that my father had been able to come from Lithuania from because one quarter was gone.

C: Staying with the theme of education, was it really important for you guys to have your children in any particular type of education,, private education, public education...

N: Let's back up. When I was in high school, I'm not bragging, I'm just saying...I did well in school. My father had more educational training, but didn't finish because he came to America. My mother only went to high school. My father could speak Russian, German, Polish, English was a stretch. My father could speak five languages. He was excellent, in fact, my father was so good that everyone here would have him translate all their letters between Lithuania and back and he would write everybody's letters. Language was a strength for him which is probably where I got it because in school when they were talking to the kids, and this was back in the fifties now, and they'd say "Nyola, your smart enough to go to college, what do you think you're going to do?" I didn't know what to do, so anyhow, I talked to my parents and my mother and father were very supportive. My grandmother said, "She's a girl, she going to get married, she's going to have babies, what do you need to spend all that money for?" But my parents said, "No, if she can do it, we want her to go." However, I met my husband, it was my first year of college and I really wanted to get married and so he made a deal with my parents that they would help us financially by letting us live with them as long as he would help pay my tuition and I would keep going to school, so I graduated from BU.

C: With a degree in what?

N: Speech pathology.

C: So you were a speech pathologist in Chelmsford?

N: Yes. I started out as a speech pathologist and ended up in special education. So, education became very important and in regards to our children that's what we said to them. There is no choice. People say today we need to give the kids a choice about what they want to do with their life. I was never democratic, I just told my kids you have to go, it's your only key to success. Our youngest son, he really liked partying in high school, was a hockey player, popular with the girls, played the guitar and had long curly hair, etc. He thought that if he went to the tech life it would be real smooth and we said "Sorry, it's not an option." So he did give us a bad time in high school...well not a bad time, he tested us more than the other kids. He said, "I'm not the oldest, I'm not the girl, I'm not your good boy, I'll just be your rebel baby." But they all went to college, they're all doing well and the best part is that every one of them thanks us.

C: That's all you can ask for. You said you did really well in school; did you go through the public school system or the Catholic school system?

N: All public until I went to BU. So, I went to elementary school in Greenhalge, I went to Varnum Junior High School and Lowell high school.

C: I'm going to switch gears a little, I know we've been here a while and things are starting to wind down, but there are two things that I would still like to cover. One is, when you said that the club used to be different, there were a lot more people, it was more of a gathering place for lots of things going on... was there ever political involvement in any way? Did you think of it as a political entity? Was it involved in city council work?

N: Now you know what's interesting, is that there used to be two Lithuanian clubs. There was another one; I don't even know the name of the street. There was another Lithuanian club and all the time I was growing up I was taught that that was the Communist club. I mean. I had relatives that belonged there and we would go there, but the people there were considered Communists because you know at the time in the 50s and 60s there were still people that thought that Communism was the way to go. So they probably did have Communist, Socialist ideologies that they were discussing. I was a little girl, I don't know, I sat on the steps and drank Coke and ate potato chips, but that was the distinction between this club and that club. It's not that they weren't friends and relatives, but that one was the Communist club. Regarding politics, that's....

C: That's really interesting. Was it a divisive issue or was it that big a deal?

N: No, as I said, I had relatives...my grandfather's brother's kids were over there, so it really didn't separate you unless you were talking politics. And then the way people lived around here too I think the same thing was happening where the kids were a little bit older than I. Their parents were around may-be a little bit after my grandparents got here, but already they were very interested in having their kids do well. There was another bakery, it was a Lithuanian bakery...

C: Do you remember the name?

N: Adrusaitis and his son was a big football player at Lowell High, ended up being a professor at U Lowell. They had the Lithuanian bakery and there was the Lithuanian tonic, which we call soda now, and they'd come to your house once a week or every other week or whatever it was, and they deliver, like the bakery man Adrusaitis who had a truck and would come with the bread and the donuts and the pastries. They'd have trays in the back and they would sell you that stuff. But he encouraged...both his kids went to college, and like I said one of them was a good football player. Tonic man the same thing, he had a big son that was a football player, Paulausitas, who ended up being another star football player and so they did encourage, it wasn't just because of sports... This club was like the Portuguese club at that time, they were still coming over from those places and the men didn't drive a car or speak English good, so this was their place to come and congregate and speak the language amongst themselves.

N: That was the other thing when people would come from Lithuania if they didn't have a family here my father would take them home and he would maybe meet them here or someplace, he'd just bring them home and say to my mother, "This is so-and-so, he just came over from Lithuania, he has no place to stay so he's going to stay here for a couple days." So my mother would end up feeding them and letting them stay for a couple days til they could find out where their relatives were cuz may-be they were in Chicago or maybe they were in Cleveland so they just needed to just find out how-do-I-get-from-here-to-there, so my father would help them. So, we had a lot of Lithuanians come from Lithuania and usually it was men, coming over to establish themselves and get their family over.

C: Was Boston a major entry point for Lithuanians?

N: Boston had a huge, huge Lithuanian community, in south Boston. They had a very intense community; they had their big church and their big club, restaurants, bakery, newspaper, a lot of stuff.

C: Were there any representatives from Lowell there? For instance, in the old train station where the Lourde[?] overpass is the Jewish community used to have someone who would just be at the train station and if anyone got off the train and they were speaking Yiddish, they would direct them to who they could talk to and where the club was. Was there that sort of network that existed?

N: I don't think so, but like I said this was a hub and the trains didn't go very far. If they did come in by train I'm sure it was very easy to direct them, but I don't know of anybody actually being there.

C: One other thing that I wanted to know, this work that's being done through the Lowell National Historic Park, you said there was a Lithuanian exhibit recently, have you or the club interacted with them much? Are you involved with the folk festival?

N: Absolutely. The first folk festival that started we had a big tent and exhibit and we did that...oh, I don't even remember...for quite a few years. They used to have parades frequently in Lowell and we'd do a float, and as small as we were we'd win prizes for our floats. The exhibit...do you know Mehmed Ali? He used to come here and I was surprised that he wasn't here for Lithuanian Independence Day because that's a big celebration.

C: Yeah, that's actually how I met your sister because I went to the flag raising.

N: Well, we were away on a cruise this year so I wasn't here, but Mehmed came and solicited all kinds of information and materials from us to set up the exhibit.

[She gave her grandmother's spinning wheel that her grandfather made, plus some clothing and cloth.]

N: And lots of photographs. In fact I think I just found my grandfather's original passport in going through some of my mother's old stuff.

C: Is there anything else you would like to add, maybe something that we didn't have a question for?

N: You were pretty comprehensive, you asked how people came here, what early life was like, holiday celebrations...The only other thing I'm thinking of is the national dress. My father brought one back for me after his first visit back to Lithuania. They had their traditional dress I should say. It's usually for festive holidays and that used to be a big part of the National Park activity, on the floats and even for Lithuanian Independence Day you'd usually see at least a dozen people dressed, but then we used to have a mass at the Lithuanian church so it was much

more involved. Get dressed up, go to the church, have all this food, and then participate at the flag raising. There would be loads of people that would come here and then too Lithuania was still really suffering, so we were always trying to raise money to free Lithuania from Russia (USSR). Maybe that's a question I'd ask...how do people keep their connection with Lithuania? Because that was always important.